**Ethics of Journalism**

Defamation means to harming someone’s reputation. If you damage someone’s reputation, you will be held responsible and pay for the damages. The two types of defamation are libel, written or printed defamation, and slander, verbal defamation. To legally prove someone has defamed another person you must prove he or she acted with malice. Malice is ignoring the truth or poorly handling information. The accused person must have been either ignorant or incompetent.

Libel is a concern for journalists, so we will look at it in depth. Libel is the publication of a false statement of fact that seriously harms someone’s reputation. To successfully sue for libel, five things must be proven:

1. Publication
   1. The statement must have been published in any of the following:
      1. Article
      2. Headline
      3. Photo caption
      4. Ad
      5. Cartoon
      6. Wills and epitaphs
      7. Guest columns, letters to the editor, quotes
      8. Promotional material
2. Someone’s reputation
   1. The person suiting must be clearly and individually identified
3. Statement of fact
   1. The libelous statement must be implied as fact
   2. You cannot sue if the statement only contains opinion
   3. If the statement is a mixture of fact and opinion, suiting is possible
4. Statement must be proven false
   1. Truth is an absolute defense for a journalist.
   2. Knowing something is true and proving something is true are two separate things.
   3. In order to prove the statement is false, reliable evidence and sufficient proof is necessary
5. Serious harm to reputation
   1. It must be proved that the false facts seriously harmed his or her reputation, not just embarrassed or offended him of her.